

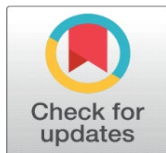
EMPOWERING WOMEN THROUGH MILLET ENTREPRENEURSHIP: CULTIVATING SUCCESS AND SUSTAINABILITY

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ABSTRACT

The value addition of millets presents significant opportunities for elevating the economic status and livelihoods of rural women not only for increased income, but also for enhancing national productivity, creating employment, and fostering economic independence, personal growth, and social upliftment. Major millets, minor millets, and little millets constitute distinct types within the millet family. In India, minor and little millets are classified as coarse cereals. Women SHGs in Odisha have been directly involved in the marketing of millets and millet-based products since 2021. This report seeks to investigate the extent to which women active in millet marketing are empowered. The study is for doing a qualitative analysis of the respondents' abilities to promote the product and focus on drawing useful conclusions on how they are being empowered. The sample for the study would involve one woman from each Self Help Group (SHG) and 5 to 6 SHGs would be taken for the collection of data. This study understands the processes involved in marketing of millets and throws light on how women empowerment is possible through it.

Keywords: Little Millet, Minor Millet, Major Millet, Marketing of Millet, SHGs, Women Empowerment

1. INTRODUCTION

Millets have numerous benefits—they are gluten free with high nutritional properties, grown in dry-arid regions, drought and disease resistance, environmental sustainability. Indian government policy initiative for 'Nutritional Security' provided incentives for rural women to take charge of their food and nutritional security through intensive millet cultivation and production. Millets the ancient grains have a 5000-year-old rich intangible cultural heritage from Indus-

Valley civilization to 3rd millennium BC with a large potential to achieve social, economic, and environmental benefits for sustainable development [Corso et al. \(2022\)](#), [Das & Ismail \(2023\)](#), [Kelvin & Morrisson \(2023\)](#) A lot of Indians grew up eating millet-based dishes. *We always had ragi dosa and Bajre ki roti on the weekends, and jowar bhakri was a mainstay in our house.* Millets have multiple uses as human food, animal fodder and for brewing beer [Corso et al. \(2022\)](#). Nearly 97% of variety of Millets are cultivated in dry lands and consumed as staple food in developing countries with vulnerable population, to overcome food scarcity, and climate resilient crop in extreme drought or high salinity conditions in India, Sub-Saharan Africa, and Asia [Borelli et al. \(2020\)](#), [Sharma et al. \(2022\)](#), [Singh \(2022\)](#), [Goswami et al. \(2022\)](#) While millets were often considered a poor man's food, they were formerly quite popular. Rich households in the nation's big cities frequently substituted it on their menus with more common grains like wheat and rice, even though it remained a vital crop for the bulk of people in the arid and semi-arid regions..It is perplexing that there are so few options for millets in India, considering their versatility, nutritional worth, and benefits to the environment. They were still utilised among isolated rural Indian groups, even though most Indians had no interest in them. On the other hand, it appears that now people all across the world are becoming more and more interested in millet.

1.2. INDIA AND MILLETS: THE CHANGING DYNAMICS OF AN OLD RELATIONSHIP

Millets are climate-resilient sustainable crops and can survive and thrive in drought to extreme high temperatures in arid and semi-arid regions of developing countries, with poor soil without any expensive fertilizers [Shetty & Gujral \(2017\)](#) Millets are resistant to crop disease and pests and help to improve soil health and reduce soil erosion. India is the largest producer of 26.6% of world millets, with 83% of its land under Millet cultivation in whole of Asia [Roychoudhury et al. \(2022\)](#). Millets have a long history in India, stretching back to the subcontinent's inception, and there has recently been a revived appreciation for these nutritious cereals as a result of the growing trend towards wholesome and sustainable meals. Millets are gluten-free, high in protein and fibre, micronutrients, have a lower glycemic index, and contain more antioxidants than modern staple grains like wheat and rice. Millets are popular with consumers who are vegetarians and value traditional Ayurvedic sattvic food, indigenous, and organic food grains [Ferrua & Singh \(2015\)](#) with high nutritional energy and health benefits [Mathew & Joseph \(2020\)](#)

Millets are advantageous for diabetics, they are appropriate for various illnesses and intolerances like celiac disease. Supergrains have gained popularity among Indian customers in recent years, particularly among those who are health-conscious, athletes, and culinary connoisseurs. Millet uses are now diversified into a variety of products including breads, cereals, snacks, and beverages.

Table 1

| Table 1 Types of Millets and its Name | | |
|---------------------------------------|-------------|------------------------------|
| Millets | Common Name | Scientific Name |
| FingerMillets | Ragi | <i>Eleusinecoracana</i> |
| FoxtailMillets | Kangni | <i>Setariaitalica</i> |
| SorghumMillets | Jowar | <i>Sorghumbicolor</i> |
| PearlMillets | Bajra | <i>Pennisetumglaucum</i> |
| ProsoMillets | Chena | <i>Panicummiliaceum</i> |
| KodoMillets | Kodon | <i>Paspalumscrobiculatum</i> |

| | | |
|-----------------|-------|-----------------------------|
| BarnyardMillets | Sanwa | <i>Echinochloacrusgalli</i> |
| LittleMillets | Kutki | <i>Panicumsumatrense</i> |

Table 2

| Table 2 Millets and its Nutritional Composition | | | | | | |
|---|---------|-----|-------|----------|---------------|------------------------|
| Millets | Protein | Fat | Fibre | Minerals | Carbohydrates | References |
| Finger Millets | 7.3 | 1.3 | 11.5 | 2.7 | 72.05 | Himanshu et al. (2018) |
| Foxtail Millets | 11.2 | 4.0 | 6.7 | 3.3 | 63.2 | Jaybhaye et al. (2014) |
| Sorghum Millets | 10.4 | 3.1 | 2.0 | 1.68 | 70.7 | Tiwari et al. (2023) |
| Pearl Millets | 11.8 | 4.8 | 2.3 | 2.2 | 67.0 | Saini et al. (2021) |
| Proso Millets | 11.0 | 3.5 | 8.5 | 1.9 | 56.1 | Das et al. (2019) |
| Kodo Millets | 8.35 | 1.5 | 5.2 | 3.3 | 65.6 | Bunkar et al. (2021) |
| Barnyard Millets | 10.5 | 3.6 | 12.6 | 2.0 | 68.8 | Ugare et al. (2014) |
| Little Millets | 8.92 | 2.5 | 6.39 | 1.72 | 65.5 | Rao et al. (2017) |

In recent times, the majority of the population in cities has been consuming various types of millets, like ragi, bajra, and jowar, either by direct cooking or through the infiltration of fast-moving consumer products.

A few of the well-known millet-based treats are millet halwa, upma, jhunka, and bhakri, as well as ragi cookies, bajra biscuits, and jowar namkeen. It's interesting to note that whole grains, seeds, and cereals that are not native to India's landscape or cuisine are rising in popularity. One such item that has become more and more common in urban diets is quinoa.

Figure 1

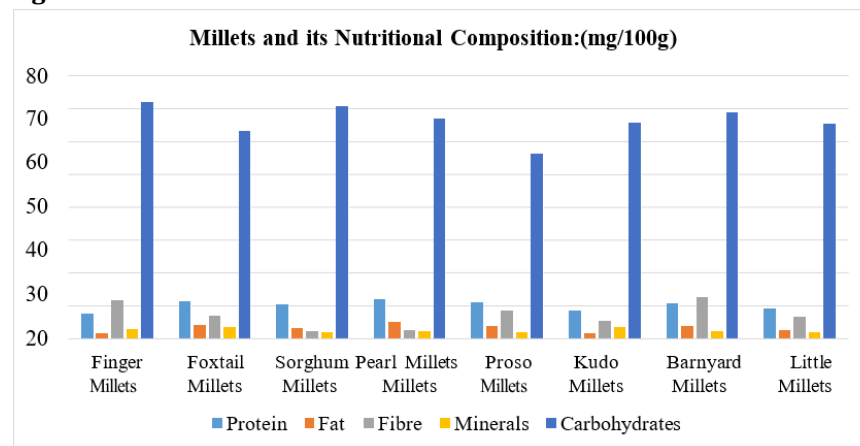


Figure 1

Therefore, the "Vocal for Local" campaign has to focus more on and provide support for local agriculture. Supporting female farmers and self-help groups (SHGs) by giving them access to modern packaging, agro-marketing, financial literacy, and other business-related skills is a sustainable way to achieve this.

Such programmes will reduce vitamin deficiency, promote millet farming, and advance concepts such as nutrition entrepreneurship. Odisha's government has taken number of steps for promoting millets. One such step is marketing millet products in Dubai.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

Gowri & Shivakumar (2020) studied “Millets Scenario in India” and observed that there was declining trend in area under millets of India from (1950-1955 to 2015-2019) at CGR 16.21 per cent; same way production was also decreasing at CGR 13.58 per cent. In case of productivity increasing trend observed from 2005

Das et al. (2019) studied “Growth and Instability in Area, production, Productivity and Consumption of Millets in India: An Analysis” and found that for pearl millet over the time (2001-01 to 2016-17) area under cultivation has decreased, production and productivity however have increased and in case of finger millet, both area under cultivation and production has decreased but productivity has increased. The total millet production and domestic consumption both has increased over time. Instability analysis found higher degree of variation for both pearl millet and finger millet production and productivity.

Anitha et al. (2019) studied “Acceptance and Impact of Millet-Based Mid-Day Meal on the nutritional Status of Adolescent School Going Children in a Peri Urban Region of Karnataka State in India” and concluded that the introduction of millets-based meals in school feeding programs can significantly improve the nutritional outcome of school going children as compared to fortified rice-based meals, and it was also found that meals can be enjoyed by the children and it can be cost effective if millets are given government pricing support as equally as rice.

Kumar et al. (2018) studied “Millets: a solution to agrarian and nutritional challenges” and found that world has been facing agrarian as well as nutritional challenges. Owing to low fertility, utilization of dry lands to produce sufficient quality grains is a big challenge. Millets as climate change compliant crops score highly over other grains like wheat and rice in terms of marginal growing conditions and high nutritional value. These nutri-cereals with vitamins, minerals, essential fatty acids, phyto-chemicals and antioxidants that can help to eradicate the plethora of nutritional deficiency diseases. Millet’s cultivation can keep drylands productive and ensure future food and nutritional security.

3. PROBLEM STATEMENT

Millet marketing aims to empower women and provide them with employment opportunities. Most government research has only examined how millet sales contribute to the fight against poverty, not how they affect women's socioeconomic empowerment and the formation of new businesses. Previous studies tended to be quantitative. No qualitative research on millet sales that empower women has been conducted. Hence this study aims to improve beneficiaries' awareness of the importance of millet marketing from their point of view in terms of boosting their sense of empowerment and entrepreneurship.

4. SIGNIFICANCE OF STUDY

The study examines the perspectives on female empowerment and entrepreneurship held by women involved in millet marketing. A qualitative method that focuses on in-depth interviews and focus groups was employed as part of the case study research design in order to gain deeper understanding of the structural meaning of empowerment. This meaning was examined while taking the participants' histories, lived experiences, and social connections into account. This

study offers important insights into how millet marketing has empowered women financially and socially.

We developed the following sub-objectives to investigate how millet marketing is enhancing women's empowerment:-

- 1) To investigate how women become socially powerful after receiving funding from millet marketing.
- 2) To determine how women become financially independent after receiving funds from millet marketing.
- 3) To determine how millet marketing increases women entrepreneurship.

4.1. MEANING OF WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

The objectives, accents, and terminologies used to describe women's empowerment are extremely varied. Empowerment has been defined in numerous studies, along with assessment techniques. The most frequently used words to define women's empowerment in the many techniques currently in use are power, choice, control, and option [Uddin et al. \(2020\)](#).

4.2. MILLET PRODUCTION AND WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

They have been recognised as indicators of food security since the mid-1990s. In the 1960s, agricultural policy was dominated by the green revolution, which gave too much emphasis on food crops.

Specifically, this study looks at how empowering women farmers can be one of the most effective methods to address the difficulties facing agriculture by promoting the value chain of millets.

4.3. SOCIAL EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN

The concept of social empowerment of women involves creating an environment that is supportive of their empowerment through the implementation of various affirmative initiatives and laws, in addition to granting them equitable and easy access to basic necessities [Mason & Smith \(2003\)](#). In the realm of development, the phrase "empowerment" has gained traction, with a focus on reducing poverty and promoting political engagement for marginalised women's groups.

Millet income has helped women in society [Jack et al. \(2008\)](#). In an important study, [Mahmud \(2003\)](#) found that women's power to make decisions about their spending and household are significantly increased by millet marketing revenue, which improves women's well-being. This income significantly contributes to women's social empowerment.

4.4. FINANCIAL EMPOWERMENT OF WOMEN

Although women's empowerment has been the subject of numerous prior studies that have examined it from a variety of angles, financial empowerment has mostly been disregarded. The study investigates women's financial empowerment. Previous studies have characterised financial empowerment in terms of three components: financial well-being, financial attitude, and financial literacy. The ability to comprehend financial concepts is referred to as financial literacy. Financial knowledge is equally important to men and women. Conversely, it is believed that

women with greater financial literacy are better able to make long-term plans [Lusardi & Mitchell \(2008\)](#). Knowledge and financial thinking are closely related. A financial mindset includes handling money, wanting to learn more about finance, and making wise investment choices. Financial empowerment and well-being are influenced by financial conduct, financial attitude, and financial knowledge, according to earlier research [Joo & Grable \(2004\)](#), [Strom et al. \(2014\)](#). A person's mindset, financial literacy, and personal traits all affect their financial well-being. Everyone's subjective definition of financial well-being varies as a result [Joo \(1998\)](#). Therefore, it is possible to evaluate women's financial empowerment using financial literacy, financial attitude, and financial well-being.

5. RESEARCH GAP

The literature claims that several indicators were covered in earlier research studies that gave a succinct overview of empowerment; however, these studies were constrained because they only looked at a small number of variables and neglected significant ontological issues, specifics, and subjective experiences that would have deepened our understanding of empowerment. Consequently, this study closes a gap in the literature since we spoke with women in situations where they felt empowered and in their natural environments. Additionally, a dearth of research was found regarding the ways in which millet sales influenced women's empowerment and entrepreneurship. The opinions of the beneficiaries were not taken into consideration since earlier studies used quantitative approaches with a top-down viewpoint that focused on the opinions of service providers rather than the receivers. It is obvious that the quantitative method is insufficient for researching women's empowerment because empowerment is a process of realisation and only women can relate their personal experiences and sentiments of empowerment. Therefore, in order to accurately represent the true feelings and experiences of women, a qualitative methodology is essential. Consequently, in order to ascertain the true significance of women's lived experiences with entrepreneurship and empowerment, the study used the bottom-to-top technique. Overall, by concentrating on the complex phenomenon of empowerment through social, financial, and entrepreneurial contexts, this study contributes to the body of literature on women's empowerment.

6. RESEARCH QUESTION

For this study, we suggest the following major research question to examine the impact of millet income on women's empowerment and the growth of their businesses: What effect does the money made by selling millet have on the empowerment of women?

Sub-Questions:

After making a living from millet sales, how does a woman rise to positions of social influence?

Once a woman makes a living from millet sales, how can she get financial empowerment?

How much does the money from millet sales help women become more successful entrepreneurs?

Theoretical Framework

7. WILLIAM'S THEORETICAL MODEL OF WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

Two ideas function as the theoretical foundations for this investigation. Williams [Dasgupta \(2005\)](#) developed the first theory, which was a theoretical foundation for women's empowerment. This model was created by utilising the creative ideas of [Kabeer \(1999\)](#). According to this theory, empowerment consists of three things: accomplishments, agency, and resources. The resources in this part highlight the motivational elements that women use to become more empowered; achievement is the extent to which women are successful in realising their life goals; and agency is the demonstration of women's capacity to attain their goals. Consequently, the results show what may be achieved when the agency pools its resources. This approach has been used to evaluate the empowerment of women.

8. STATUS WITHDRAWAL THEORY

The status withdrawal theory, the second theory examined in this study, explains what happens to particular groups of people who realise they are not accepted by society. To gain social respect, they turn to entrepreneurship [Hagen \(1963\)](#). Eradication of status consequently affects entrepreneurship. Using this theoretical framework, the growth strategies of female millet traders are examined. Since every female millet vendor hails from a low-income household, our research will focus on whether or not they aspire to elevate their social status through starting their own enterprise.

9. METHODOLOGY

The status withdrawal theory, the second theory examined in this study, explains what happens to particular groups of people who realise they are not accepted by society. To gain social respect, they turn to entrepreneurship [Hagen \(1963\)](#). Eradication of status consequently affects entrepreneurship. Using this theoretical framework, the growth strategies of female millet traders are examined. Since every female millet vendor hails from a low-income household, our research will focus on whether or not they aspire to elevate their social status through starting their own enterprise.

Table 3

| Table 3 Themes and Variables of the Study | | |
|---|---|---|
| S. No. | Area - In depth Interview and Focus Group | Variables |
| 1 | Demography | Education, Age, Gender, Family size |
| 2 | Lifestyle | Occupation, Income, Micro-business |
| 3 | Empowerment | Factors leading to Empowerment (Social and Financial) |
| 4 | Entrepreneurship | Access to Seed Money, Control on income from millet selling Utilization |

The participants were chosen via purposeful sampling, which is frequently employed in case studies with a lot of material [Rai & Ravi \(2011\)](#). Thirty-five or more people made up six of the sample. Two sections comprised the semi-structured

interviews; the first part asked background questions regarding the participants' potential for profit from millet sales. The second part of the survey inquired about the respondents' perceptions on their experiences growing in authority. For instance, participants were required to give detailed explanations of their everyday tasks and how those responsibilities changed once they started making money from selling millets. Additionally, sample questions like "What role has income from millet sales played in your life?" were utilised. Have you made any observations?

Table 4

| Table 4 Details of Participants | | | | | | | |
|---------------------------------|-------------------|-----|----------------|------------|-----------------------------|---------------------------------|---------------------|
| S. No. | Participant codes | Age | Marital status | Education | Business type | Number of dependents (children) | Monthly income (Rs) |
| 1 | Participant 1 | 41 | Married | Illiterate | Making products from millet | 2 | 15000 |
| 2 | Participant 2 | 38 | Married | Primary | Making products from millet | 2 | 10000 |
| 3 | Participant 3 | 40 | Married | Illiterate | Making products from millet | 3 | 10000 |
| 4 | Participant 4 | 39 | Married | Illiterate | Making products from millet | 2 | 12000 |
| 5 | Participant 5 | 41 | Married | Primary | Making products from millet | 2 | 8000 |
| 6 | Participant 6 | 36 | Married | Primary | Making products from millet | 2 | 10000 |

10. FOCUS GROUP

A focus group is useful for analysing participants' experiences and interactions. We investigated the best loan practices, saving programmes, and effective interpersonal interactions among members through focus groups. The group discussion assisted us in clarifying some points.

11. DATA ANALYSIS, RESULTS, AND DISCUSSION

The data is analysed using thematic analysis. The study employed taped interviews, and the data processing method started with iterative coding [Dasgupta \(2005\)](#). The data is matched using first-order codes that answer the primary study question, which is how millet sales revenue influences women's empowerment. Next, utilising common themes, data fragments from different but related open coding categories were linked together. Thus, it is possible to integrate first- and second-order codes more precisely.

12. INCORPORATING FIRST ORDER CODES WITH SECOND ORDER THEMES

In the second phase, the data was evaluated to make sure the second-order themes were accurate. The second-order themes either complemented or emerged from the first-order themes. We looked at the structures to confirm that the subjects

are first-order themes. By using first-order coding notes on respondents' increasing degree of decision-making freedom, for example, we were able to generate a second-order theme that characterises "increase in independence in decision-making power" Later, this assertion was renamed "Social Empowerment" and was backed up with first-order coding statements describing the autonomy to make decisions without consulting others. This analysis not only facilitates a deeper study and development of other new notions, such as "being independent," but it also helps to make this process more accurate.

Table 5

| Table 5 Overview of Data Structure | | | |
|------------------------------------|---|--|---|
| S. No. | Descriptive codes | Second Order Themes | Theoretical Dimensions |
| 1 | Able to express my opinion in front of my relatives, Fearless enough to challenge family members' beliefs and ask questions | Confidence in expressing an opinion | Social Empowerment |
| 2 | Able to take part in household decision-making, able to decide how to spend loans and buy assets | Autonomy in decision making | |
| 3 | possess priceless possessions, authority over funds and savings | Control on assets | Financial Empowerment |
| 4 | Able to contribute to household income, Prepared for unexpected expenses | Control on household spending | |
| 5 | able to control daily food costs, Can give my kids a place to live | Basic needs are managed | Improvement in lifestyle |
| 6 | Able to buy quality clothing for my kids and afford better health facilities | Improvement in living standards | |
| 7 | own aspiration to provide for a family on one's own, a strong desire to make money | Self-motivated | Entrepreneurial spirit |
| 8 | faced a number of obstacles in life since childhood, Capable of handling any unforeseen obstacle in life | Tolerant of ambiguity | |
| 9 | a challenge to spend enough time with family, Having trouble scheduling time for household tasks | Difficulty in fulfilling family responsibilities | Difficulty in achieving work-life balance |
| 10 | unable to focus entirely on work because to children I had additional social obstacles in running the company since I am a "woman." | Difficulty in managing business | |

Every one of our responders said they felt more confident and empowered than they did at the beginning. Every participant acknowledged that home expenses including children's education and electricity bills account for the majority of their income. To get at the study's conclusions, thematic analysis—which is helpful for doing identification analysis and pattern reporting within data—was used [Strom et al. \(2014\)](#). The goal of this study was to determine whether millet sales revenue may be used to empower women.

Using a case study methodology, the study examines how women's social and financial empowerment is impacted by the money they sell millet. Focus group meetings were held in conjunction with in-depth interviews. In light of William's thesis, we investigated how women have lived experiences both before and after obtaining a loan from Government impacted their social and financial

empowerment. Every participant in the focus group discussion presented their personal story, and during the in-depth interviews, each case was thoroughly examined to gain a deeper understanding of the unique problems that each member had to deal with. Open-ended questions in this study helped to clarify the real events that occurred.

12.1. CASE 1

Basant Manjari Jena faced lot of financial strain as her husband's earning was not enough to meet the family's growing financial requirements. To help make ends meet, Basant Manjari started making various items from millet. Thanks to the financial support she received from Bank and encouragement from Kasturba SHG. At first her in-laws weren't supportive and felt it would distract from her housework. But soon they realized how her income could help the family. Today Basant has made enough money to spend on her daughter's marriage, expand her business and send her son to an Engineering College. The credit for her success goes to her decision of taking a loan and starting a new journey in her life. *She narrated:*

It was a challenge for me to feed and bring up my children. But the financial support from Bank helped me to get out of the crisis. After receiving training from members of SHG federation, I was able to do various items from millet like 'mixture', 'ladu', 'nimiki' etc. Now I am financially stable and supporting my family. Earlier I was only doing household chores but now I am able to do bank work, attend meetings and programmes in hotels. I am also helping other women in distress and offer training to those who are interested to be involved in this business.

12.2. CASE 2

Pravasini Sahu, a member of Matrubhumi SHG mentioned the problems she faced in meeting her family expenses. There was scarcity of money in the mid of month as her husband's meager income was not sufficient to fulfill all their demands. This pushed her into distress as she pondered to find a way out of this situation. Soon things changed for better when 10 women formed self-help group and got loan from bank to produce various products from millets. *She expressed:-*

We do lot of products like mixture, biscuit, 'chatua' 'arisha' etc from millet and sale it at the outlet in Krushi Bhawan. The products are purchased by Govt. Departments during their seminars and workshops. Now, I get a steady income every month from the sale of value added products from millets. The income has helped in meeting the educational expenses of my children and expands the business. My first and second daughter completed engineering degree and doing jobs. The sale from millet products has earned profit for me and rescued my family from financial distress.

12.3. CASE 3

Jogamaya Sahu and her family suffered a lot due to loss in their petty business. They managed to meet their family expenses for three months with their meager savings. Her family faced immense hardship to feed the family of five. In order to tide the difficult situation she took loan from the Kousalya SHG of which she was a member and started producing various items from millet. Her husband also helped her with the business. Now she is producing various items from millet like chatua, mixture, 'pitha' etc. The traders are coming to her place and picking up the millet items. Now she is able to reap profit from the business. *Jogamaya shared the success of her business:-*

It was a tough time for us when there was no profit in our petty business. I had sleepless nights thinking how I would meet the expenses of my family. Many times my husband & me had fights for money. Now I am happy that my husband has decided to help me in my business. Together we are able to produce enough items from millet which can be given to the traders. I was able to support my son financially to complete his BCA programme. The uncertain times and helplessness has passed. Now after meeting my family expense I am also saving to meet any such eventualities in future.

Table 6

Table 6 Representative Supporting Data for Each Second-Order Theme

| S. No. | Second Order themes | First Order codes |
|--------|--|--|
| 1 | Confidence in expressing an opinion | I feel more comfortable discussing my opinions and recommendations with my spouse and in-laws now that I have established and managed my micro-business. Before, my spouse was in charge of everything related to the family. But now that I am working alongside him to support my family as well, I don't hesitate to provide any household-related suggestions, which gives me a sense of confidence. |
| 2 | Autonomy in decision making | My husband used to be the only one who made decisions. However, I now take an equal part in all home choices. My in-laws take into account my recommendations when using loan funds and making other home decisions. I make my own decisions regarding my finances, income, living expenses, and personal care. |
| 3 | Control over assets | Never in my life have I owned any real estate. However, after receiving a money from selling millets, I bought a little store in my name so that I could independently manage all of the money and savings. |
| 4 | Control over household spending | Before, my spouse was in charge of all savings and created the family budget. He never kept money set up for unforeseen costs. However, since I am now in control of the family's finances, I always save money in case something unanticipated happens. I now handle and budget for all household expenses as the only provider. Being able to manage my finances on my own makes me happy. |
| 5 | Basic needs are managed | My children and I have frequently gone to bed without having eaten dinner. I never dreamed that one day I would be able to care for my family's fundamental needs, but after starting my own business, I am now entirely capable of managing and providing for their basic needs. |
| 6 | Improvement in living standards | We have experienced some truly terrible days. We were able to buy our kids nice clothes thanks to millet selling, and I'm happy that I can now afford to put my kids in better health and educational facilities. |
| 7 | Self-motivated | I understand that I am the only one who can raise my kids. To support my family, I will therefore continue to work hard. I am driven because I know that using my money is the only way I can provide my kids a great education.. |
| 8 | Tolerant of ambiguity | Since I was a little child, I have had many trying times in my life. Now that life has made me obstinate, I don't fear facing any unforeseen circumstances. |
| 9 | Difficulty in fulfilling family responsibilities | To conduct business, I need to spend the full day at the shop. As a result, I'm always weary and unable to make meals for my children. I find it difficult to spend enough time with my family and children. |
| 10 | Difficulty in managing business | I was thinking about my kids all the time at work. Because I am a woman in our society, where running a business is more difficult, I am unable to devote all of my attention to my business. |

12.4. CASE 4

Basanti Nayak shared her life before her involvement in SHGs and being involved in business. With very less money to meet the family expenses, she hoped to do some business and support her family. A ray of hope emerged when she joined

Sanjeevani SHG and started doing various value added products from millet. She also helped in the mid day meal programme in the nearby Govt. school. *She narrated her experience:-*

I feel so happy that millet has created a source of income for me. I prepare various items from 'mandia, ragi, kangu and sua'. Apart from selling these products at the Krushi Bhawan outlet, I also sale it to the traders from various districts. I could meet my two sons engineering college expenses and also meet household expenses from the profit I earned from the business.

12.5. CASE 5

Jayanti Nayak said my husband is an auto driver and many times it becomes difficult to meet all the house hold expenses with the amount of money he earned daily. There was frequent quarrel among us for money. Life changed when I thought of being financially independent. *She mentioned:-*

Now, with the assistance of Sukanya SHG, I am preparing millets and selling them to shops and traders. I can financially support my family while simultaneously meeting my children's educational needs. I used to depend on the income of my husband, but now I am self-sufficient and give opinion in my family's spending decisions.

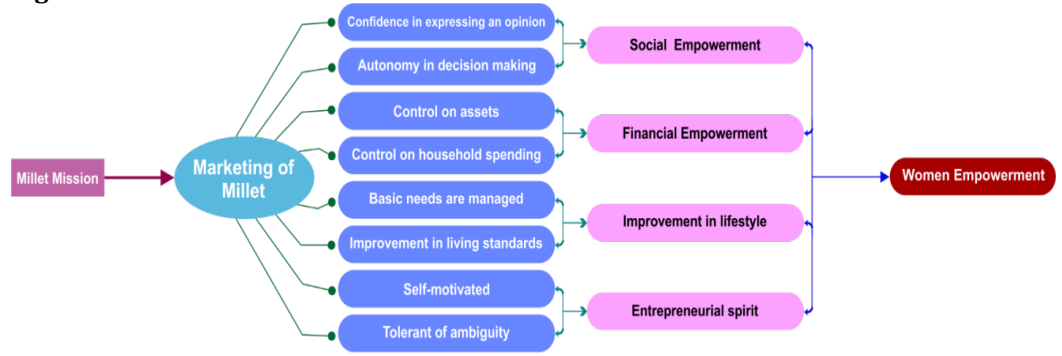
12.6. CASE 6

Laxmipriya Sahu shared that her husband lost his job during Covid-19 pandemic. Life became difficult as they had no other source of income. They could not pay the rent of their house and tuition fees of children. She decided to take loan from Sanjeevani SHG and produce products from millet. She convinced her husband who was bit skeptical for taking the loan amount. *She shared her business venture:-*

As I am expert in making various 'pitha', I made arisa, karanji, nimiki from millet and sold it to various traders. Soon my business flourished and I fully repaid the loan amount. Now we are able to meet all our household expenditure and invest some money in expanding our business. I am happy that I am utilizing my free time in earning and meeting the expenses of our family.

We discovered that after starting their own businesses, women felt more strong and self-assured as a result of the money they made selling millet. They now have a strong belief in their potential to succeed as business owners and control their own fate. Women borrow money to support their families and to make wise investments in certain types of entrepreneurship. When they are financially secure, they begin to save money for future requirements. These findings have also been supported by previous research [Strom et al. \(2014\)](#). Women today are serious about their work and are content to support their families and spouses [37] Given that millet income encourages women to make substantial contributions and benefits them financially. Moreover, it greatly enhances women's capacity to make autonomous decisions and fosters their entrepreneurial abilities. It gives women tangible development (access to food and other necessities of life) as well as intangible development (motivation, self-belief, self-empowerment, confidence, and autonomy). The participants in the study recognised using their agency and resources to become empowered, which is compatible with William's theoretical framework for women's empowerment.

Figure 2



Model of Women Empowerment Through Marketing of Millet

Figure 2

13. CONCLUSION

The present study examines the extent to which women's empowerment in Odisha is influenced by incomes related to millet. The results demonstrated that one effective strategy for boosting women's empowerment is income. The information backs up William's thesis' theoretical component, which classifies women's empowerment into three categories: accomplishments, agency, and assets. The study gave women the freedom to choose and to travel around without being constrained by social norms. A developing nation must prioritise the expansion and development of entrepreneurship in order to achieve stability. The six cases examined in this study show that millet sales can be a person's main source of consistent income, which can significantly raise their standard of living. They started the business single handedly but soon the other members joined in the business. Because of this, selling millet has grown to be a substantial source of income for a large number of the poor. Figure 1 illustrates the positive and significant impact that millet sales income has on rural women as well as the ways in which the millet mission empowers women.

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS

None.

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